

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PBOR, IS, LE

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REFS: (A) BEIRUT 4372; (B) STATE 212389; (C) TEL AVIV
6594

1. FOR TEL AVIV: WE BELIEVE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR
SOUTH LEBANON HAVE NOW JELLED SUFFICIENTLY AND OFFER
CREDIBLE ENOUGH POSSIBILITY OF A RESOLUTION OF DANGEROUS
SITUATION THERE FOR YOU TO SEEK EARLY OCCASION TO DIS-
CUSS THEIR EVOLUTION FURTHER WITH GOI AND PRESS FOR
ISRAELI COMMITMENT TO TAKE NO ACTION DURING IMPLEMENTA-
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TION PHASE THAT WOULD DERAIL OR SUBVERT PROCESS. GIVEN
CURRENT STATUS OF ISSUE AND IMPORTANCE OF RECEIVING
BINDING ISRAELI ASSURANCES ASAP, WE LEAVE IT TO YOUR
JUDGMENT WHETHER YOU SHOULD DISCUSS MATTER WITH WEIZMAN
OR BEGIN.

2. IN YOUR DISCUSSION, YOU SHOULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING

MAJOR POINTS:

--DEPARTMENT HAS CONSIDERED POINTS MADE BY WEIZMAN IN YOUR SEPT 3 DISCUSSION AND HAS ADDITIONALLY RECEIVED FURTHER INFORMATION AND CLARIFICATIONS FROM BOUTROS WHICH

LEAD US TO CONCLUDE THAT THE PROPOSED CEASEFIRE PLAN FOR SOUTH LEBANON HOLDS PROMISE FOR A RESOLUTION OF THE DANGEROUS SITUATION IN THAT REGION IN A MANNER WHICH WILL TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF ISRAEL'S REASONABLE CONCERNS FOR THE SECURITY OF ITS NORTHERN FRONTIER.

--BOUTROS HAS TOLD US THAT BOTH THE SYRIANS AND THE PLO HAVE AGREED TO A SCHEMA GENERALLY ALONG THE LINES WHICH WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED TO DAYAN AND WEIZMAN. THESE ASSURANCES AS WELL AS RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PLO SPOKESMEN IN BEIRUT POINT TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL OF THE BULK OF PALESTINIAN ARMED ELEMENTS FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON COULD BE CARRIED OUT EXPEDITIOUSLY ONCE A HALT TO ARTILLERY AND OTHER EXCHANGES IN THE AREA OCCURS. IT SEEMS TO US, THEREFORE, THAT WE HAVE REACHED AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO PUT THE SINCERITY OF THE PARTIES TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND SECURITY ALONG THE LEBANESE-ISRAELI FRONTIER TO THE TEST.

--BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF ARMED
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PALESTINIANS HAVE COMMITTED THEMSELVES, ONCE A FIRM CEASEFIRE IS ACHIEVED, TO WITHDRAW FROM THE SOUTHERN PART OF LEBANON, INITIALLY TO POSITIONS WITHIN THE REGIONS OF LEBANON POLICED BY THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF) AND, ULTIMATELY IN THE CASE OF THOSE WHO ENTERED LEBANON IN RECENT YEARS, TO SYRIA OR OTHER ARAB STATES. ONCE THIS WITHDRAWAL IS UNDER WAY, ELEMENTS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCES, WHICH ISRAEL HAS CONSISTENTLY SAID IT WOULD WELCOME ALONG ITS NORTHER FRONTIER, WOULD DEPLOY THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH AND, IN PARTICULAR, WITHIN A 10 KILOMETER WIDE ZONE OPPOSITE ISRAELI TERRITORY INTO WHICH PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS WILL NOT RPT NOT PENETRATE.

--WE RECOGNIZE ISRAELI VIEWS REGARDING THE DESIREABILITY OF HAVING ALL ARMED PALESTINIANS WITHDRAW NORTH OF THE LITANI BUT SEE NO RPT NO POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING THIS OBJECTIVE UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. IF IMPLEMENTED, THE RESIDUAL PALESTINIAN STRENGTH IN THE REGION, BOTH IN MANPOWER AND WEAPONRY, WOULD BE REDUCED SUBSTANTIALLY FROM WHAT IT IS NOW AND THE NET GAIN FOR ISRAEL IN TERMS OF SECURITY WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT. THE PALESTINIANS WOULD HAVE NO RPT NO ARMED PRESENCE IN THE COASTAL AREA

OF LEBANON AND MILITIAS IN THE CAMPS AROUND TYRE WOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE SAME STRICT LIMITATIONS AS THOSE IN THE REMAINDER OF LEBANON'S REFUGEE CAMPS. FURTHERMORE, THE DEPLETION OF PALESTINIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH WOULD STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE LEBANESE ARMY IN THE AREA, AS WOULD THE PRESENCE OF THE BULK OF ARMED PALESTINIANS IN AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE ADF.

--IN ACCEPTING THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT, THE PLO HAS TOLD THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT THAT IT IS PREPARED TO ANNOUNCE A CEASEFIRE IN THE SOUTH AND BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION (WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETED IN SEVERAL WEEKS) AS SOON AS THE LEBANESE HAVE INFORMED THE PLO THAT ISRAEL AND THE MARONITE FORCES IN THE SOUTH WILL NOT IMPEDE
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OR INTERFERE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WITHDRAWAL. ACCORDING TO BOUTROS, THE PLO WILL PUBLICLY COMMIT ITSELF NOT RPT NOT TO UNDERTAKE "ACTS WHICH WOULD UNDERMINE SECURITY IN THE SOUTH." ON THE BASIS OF HIS CONTACTS WITH THE PLO, BOUTROS IS SATISFIED THAT HE HAS AN EXPLICIT COMMITMENT FROM THE PLO TO REFRAIN FROM OPERATIONS OR INFILTRATION ACTIVITY AGAINST ISRAEL IN SOUTH LEBANON.

--WE HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF WEIZMAN'S INTEREST IN THE FUTURE OF THE MARONITE CHRISTIANS OF SOUTH LEBANON AND THE FUTURE OF THE "GOOD FENCE.; AS WEIZMAN IS AWARE, WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THE EXTENSION THROUGHOUT LEBANON OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE CONSTITUTIONALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENT OF SARKIS. WE BELIEVE THIS DEVELOPMENT IS NECESSARY NOT ONLY FOR THE SECURITY AND WELL-BEING OF LEBANON AND ALL OF ITS CITIZENS, BUT ALSO HOLDS THE GREATEST PROMISE OF INSTITUTING MEASURES THAT WILL RESTORE STABILITY IN SOUTH LEBANON, THEREBY MEETING ISRAEL'S UNDERSTANDABLE SECURITY INTERESTS. WE ARE SATISFIED THAT SARKIS'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO RESTORE THE UNITY OF HIS PEOPLE AND THAT IT WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH THAT POLICY AS WELL AS IMPOLITIC FOR HIM TO TAKE PUNITIVE MEASURES AGAINST LEBANESE FOR WHOM, BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANCES, HIS GOVERNMENT HAS NOT UNTIL NOW BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND SECURITY. THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT IN THE SOUTH PROMISES TO CHANGE THAT SITUATION AND REUNITE THE MORAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY HE HAS FOR THE WELFARE OF THE MARONITES AND OTHER COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH. WE SEE THIS AS A MAJOR ADVANTAGE OF THE PLAN HIS GOVERNMENT HAS OUTLINED.

--AS REGARDS THE "GOOD FENCE", WE HAVE NOT RPT NOT HAD
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DISCUSSIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSED CEASEFIRE ON THIS SUBJECT. BASICALLY, OUR POSITION IS, AS WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY INFORMED THE ISRAELIS, THAT BORDER ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE WORKED OUT BY THE TWO SOVEREIGN STATES INVOLVED. AS GOI IS FULLY AWARE, WE SINCERELY SEEK, IN THE CONTEXT OF A JUST AND LASTING PEACE FOR THE REGION, OPEN AND NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ALL ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS. IN FACT, HOWEVER, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, BECAUSE OF THE RECENT CIVIL STRIFE, HAS NEVER HAD A PART IN ARRANGING OR APPROVING THE "GOOD FENCE" POLICY AND WE CANNOT SPEAK IN ITS BEHALF ON THE ISSUE. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT ITS ATTITUDE REGARDING THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE POLICY, WHICH WE CANNOT ACCEPT AS ANALOGOUS TO THE "OPEN BRIDGES" WITH JORDAN, WILL BE GREATLY CONDITIONED BY ISRAELI PUBLIC TREATMENT OF THE QUESTION. IN ANY EVENT, THIS SEEMS TO US TO BE AN EXTRANEIOUS ISSUE IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT AND SO LONG AS THE SARKIS REGIME DOES NOT CONTROL SOUTH LEBANON.

3. IN CONCLUSION, YOU SHOULD TELL GOI THAT WE ARE CONVINCED THAT, WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GUARANTEE THAT THE AGREEMENT WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS PROPOSED, EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE BY THOSE INTERESTED IN PEACE AND SECURITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION. IF THE EFFORT DOES SUCCEED, WE SEE POSITIVE ADVANTAGES FOR ISRAEL, FOR LEBANON AND ITS POPULATION IN THE SOUTH, AND FOR AREA STABILITY. ISRAEL WOULD NOT, IN OUR CONSIDERED VIEW, RUN ANY CREDIBLE RISK BY EXERCIZING RESTRAINT IN THE INTERVAL AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE, SHOULD IT OCCUR, WOULD BE SQUARELY ASSESSED. WE, THEREFORE, URGE THAT ISRAEL MAINTAIN THE WAIT AND SEE POSTURE INDICATED PREVIOUSLY BY WEIZMAN, TAKING NO ACTION THAT WOULD IMPEDE IMPLEMENTATION AND EMPLOYING ITS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE OVER THE MARONITE FORCES IN THE SOUTH TO SHOW SIMILAR RESTRAINT VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL AND THE ENTRY OF LEBANESE

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ARMY FORCES. BOUTROS HAS INFORMED US THAT THE AGREEMENT IS READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND AWAITS ONLY AN ISRAELI INDICATION THAT IT WILL NOT INTERVENE TO UPSET THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASES.

4. IN VIEW OF OUR EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH ISRAEL ON THIS QUESTION OVER THE MONTHS AND WHAT WE BELIEVE TO

BE OUR MUTUAL INTEREST IN ACHIEVING A REASONABLE RESOLUTION OF THIS DANGEROUS SITUATION, WE WOULD HOPE THAT WEIZMAN (OR BEGIN) WILL AUTHORIZE US ASAP TO INFORM BOUTROS THAT ISRAEL AND THE MARONITE FORCES UNDER ITS INFLUENCE WILL EXERCISE RESTRAINT AND REFRAIN FROM INITIATING MILITARY ACTION WHILE THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT IS GIVEN A CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

5. FOR BEIRUT: YOU MAY INFORM BOUTROS THAT, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT THAT HE HAS GIVEN US ARE NOW ACCURATE, WE ARE AGAIN APPROACHING THE ISRAELIS TO SEEK ASSURANCES THAT THEY WILL GIVE THE AGREEMENT A REASONABLE OPPORTUNITY TO BE IMPLEMENTED. YOU MAY DRAW, AT YOUR DISCRETION, FROM OUR INSTRUCTIONS TO AMBASSADOR LEWIS IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH BOUTROS. YOU SHOULD ALSO INFORM BOUTROS THAT, HAVING MADE THIS STRONG REPRESENTATION FOR ISRAELI RESTRAINT, WE WILL PASS TO HIM THE ISRAELI REACTION AS SOON AS RECEIVED AND WILL EXPECT TO BE KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING THE NATURE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT.
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